

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-25 NEA-10 ISO-00 NSCE-00 CIAE-00

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RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14

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R 210357Z NOV 73

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8766

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

USINT CAIRO

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USLO PEKING

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 HONG KONG 11655

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CH, XF, IS

SUBJ: PEKING ASSESSMENT OF THE OCTOBER WAR

SUMMARY: PEKING VIEWS THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE RECENT MID-EAST
CRISIS AS ESSENTIALLY NEGATIVE, AT LEAST IN THE SHORT-TERM.

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THE SOVIET UNION HAS ENHANCED ITS POSITION AND PRC POLICY IS

AGAIN IN OPEN OPPOSITION TO THAT OF EGYPT AND SYRIA. CHINA OPPOSED THE CEASEFIRE AND THE UNEF NOT ONLY BECAUSE THEY WERE "CONCOCTED" BY THE SUPERPOWERS BUT ALSO OUT OF A BELIEF THAT IN THE LONG-RUN THE ARABS WOULD BE DISSATISFIED AND FRUSTRATED BY THE UN ACTION. ON BALANCE, THE PRC ALSO PROBABLY SEES POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC LOSSES FOR ITSELF IN THE EVENT OF AN ARAB-ISRAELI SETTLEMENT, EITHER PARTIAL OR GENERAL. WE EXPECT THE PRC WILL, HOWEVER, FOLLOW A FLEXIBLE LINE AVOIDING DIRECT ACTION TO BLOCK PEACE MOVES BUT DISASSOCIATING ITSELF FROM SOLUTIONS WHICH ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE TO THE ARAB MILITANTS. END SUMMARY.

1. PEKING FAVORS THE EMERGENCE OF A STRONG ARAB BLOC INDEPENDENT OF THE SUPERPOWERS AND THUS LESS VULNERABLE TO SOVIET PENETRATION. CONSEQUENTLY, PEKING STATEMENTS HAVE STRESSED THAT THE MOST IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS TO EMERGE FROM THE OCTOBER WAR ARE THE "UNPRECEDENTED MILITANT UNITY" OF THE ARAB WORLD AND THE CLEAR DEMONSTRATION OF ARAB POLITICAL POWER AMONG AN OIL HUNGRY INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY. PEKING'S REPORTS ON THE MID-EAST CRISIS DID NOT AT FIRST UNDERSCORE THE USE OF OIL AS A WEAPON BUT RECENTLY CHINESE MEDIA HAVE EMPHASIZED THAT "THE PEOPLES OF VARIOUS ARAB COUNTRIES HAVE REALIZED THROUGH THE WAR THE MIGHT OF THEIR UNITED STRUGGLE, AND HAVE GREATER CONFIDENCE IN USING OIL AS A WEAPON."

2. THE CHINESE HAVE ALSO UNDERSCORED THE DIPLOMATIC SETBACKS FOR ISRAEL SINCE THE NEW CONFLICT BEGAN, PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA. LIKEWISE, THE CONFLICT MAY OPEN THE DOOR TO AN IMPROVEMENT OF THE PRC'S RELATIONS WITH SOME OF THE CONSERVATIVE ARAB STATES SUCH AS SAUDI ARABIA AND JORDAN.

3. ON BALANCE, HOWEVER, THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE PRESENT CRISIS ARE PROBABLY SEEN BY THE CHINESE AS ESSENTIALLY NEGATIVE, AT LEAST IN THE SHORT-TERM. EVENTS OF THE PAST SIX WEEKS HAVE AGAIN HIGHLIGHTED PEKING'S LACK OF INFLUENCE AND LEVERAGE IN THE MID-EAST WHILE MOSCOW'S ROLE HAS BEEN ENHANCED AND THE ARABS HAVE BECOME MORE DEPENDENT UPON SOVIET ASSISTANCE THAN EVER BEFORE. SPECIFICALLY, THE USSR HAS MORE THAN MADE UP ITS POLITICAL LOSSES IN EGYPT OVER WHICH THE CHINESE GLOATED FOR THE PAST YEAR. AT THE SAME TIME, PRC POLICY IS AGAIN IN OPEN OPPOSITION TO THAT OF EGYPT AND SYRIA, ALTHOUGH PEKING THIS TIME IS ATTEMPTING TO MINIMIZE THE CONTRAST. IT HAS AVOIDED, FOR EXAMPLE, QUOTING QADHAFI'S CRITICISM OF EGYPT'S
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TECHNICAL NEGOTIATIONS WITH ISRAEL ON THE CEASEFIRE,

4. LIKEWISE, WHILE PEKING HAS FOUND SATISFACTION IN EUROPEAN DOUBTS ABOUT U.S.-SOVIET "POWER POLITICS" WHICH THE CRISIS HAS RAISED, IT HAS NOT APPEARED PLEASED BY THE DIVISIVE EFFECT OF THE WAR ON THE U.S.-WEST EUROPEAN ALLIANCE. ON THE CONTRARY, DURING THE FIGHTING IN THE MID-EAST, CHOU IN HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH VARIOUS WESTERN VISITORS CONTINUED TO URGE NATO UNITY AND RETENTION OF U.S. FORCES

IN EUROPE. SIMILARLY, ONE MAY INFER THAT THE PRC DOES NOT WELCOME THE LOGISTIC PROBLEM CREATED FOR U.S. MILITARY FORCES IN ASIA BY THE OIL EMBARGO THOUGH IT HAS NOT REPORTED THIS DEVELOPMENT. ONE MAY ALSO SPECULATE THAT PEKING IS NOT HAPPY ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE ARAB USE OF OIL AS A WEAPON HAS STRENGTHENED JAPANESE INTEREST IN SIBERIA AS A SOURCE OF SUPPLY.

5. WHILE BLAMING BOTH SUPERPOWERS FOR UNDERMINING THE ARAB PEOPLES STRUGGLE, THE PRC INDICATED THAT ITS MAJOR CONCERN DURING THE CRISIS WAS THAT THE USSR WOULD EXPAND ITS POWER POSITION. THIS WAS REFLECTED IN PEKING'S TREATMENT OF U.S. MILITARY ALERT AND NAVAL MOVEMENTS WHICH WERE PORTRAYED AS EXAMPLES OF HEGEMONIC CONTENTION BUT NEVERTHELESS NECESSARY TO THWART SOVIET EXPANSIONIST PLANS. SIMILARLY, THE PRC APPROVED AND SUPPORTED U.S. OPPOSITION TO INCLUSION IN THE UNEF OF FORCES FROM ANY PERMANENT SC MEMBER.

6. THE CHINESE HAVE HAD TO EQUIVOCATE SOMEWHAT IN REGARD TO THE MID-EAST CEASEFIRE. PEKING'S FAILURE TO CRITICIZE THE SIX POINT AGREEMENT BETWEEN EGYPT AND ISRAEL WORKED OUT UNDER U.S. AUSPICES REFLECTS THE DELICATE BALANCE WHICH THE CHINESE MUST MAINTAIN IN OPPOSING THE CEASEFIRE FOR THEIR OWN REASONS OF POWER DIPLOMACY WHILE TRYING TO MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS WITH EGYPT AND OTHER MODERATE ARAB GOVERNMENTS. DESPITE ITS PUBLIC PROTESTATIONS THAT THE CEASEFIRE HALTED THE ARAB'S VICTORIOUS ADVANCE, PEKING SEEMED TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION WAS NECESSARY TO AVOID PROBABLE DISASTER FOR CAIRO AND POSSIBLE DIRECT SOVIET INTERVENTION. CHINA NEVERTHELESS FELT COMPELLED TO OPPOSE THE CEASEFIRE AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE UNEF NOT ONLY BECAUSE THEY WERE "CONCOCTED" BY THE SUPERPOWERS, BUT ALSO OUT OF A BELIEF THAT IN THE LONG-RUN THE ARABES WOULD BE DISSATISFIED AND FRUSTRATED BY THE UN ACTION. AT A OCT. 31 BANQUET FOR PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM, CHOU EN-LAI WARNED THAT "EVEN IF THEY (THE SUPER-
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POWERS) MAY APPEAR TO SUCCEED FOR A TIME (IN THE MIDDLE EAST,) THEY ARE DOOMED TO FAILURE." TENSIONS AND TURBULENCE, HE PREDICTED, "WILL CONTINUALLY RECUR IN THE MID-EAST." THUS PEKING'S CURRENT LINE IS THAT A "NO-WAR, NO-PEACE" SITUATION IS BEING RESTORED.
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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 EUR-25 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-14 NSCE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10

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INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

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AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

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7. ALTHOUGH THE PRC ANTICIPATES AN ULTIMATE BREAKDOWN OF THE CEASE-FIRE, ITS IMMEDIATE DILEMMA IS HOW TO RESPOND TO A POSSIBLE PEACE CONFERENCE OR OTHER MOVES TOWARD A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT. WHILE THE CHINESE APPARENTLY SEE MORE LOSSES THAN GAINS IN THE RECENT FULL SCALE WARFARE IN THE MID-EAST, WE BELIEVE THEY DO NOT REPEAT NOT
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WELCOME THE PROSPECT OF A FORMAL PEACE AGREEMENT, EITHER PARTIAL OR GENERAL. AN ARAB-ISRAELI PEACE WOULD EASE, AT LEAST TEMPORARILY, A MAJOR AREA OF U.S.-SOVIET CONTENTION--A DEVELOPMENT WHICH WOULD PRESENT BOTH POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC LOSSES FOR THE PRC. A

SETTLEMENT WOULD, MOREOVER, UNDERMINE CHINA'S INTERNATIONAL LINE WHICH STRESSES THE ALLEGED CONTENTION AND COLLUSION OF THE SUPER-POWERS, AND IT WOULD DAMPEN THE FIRES WHICH ARE FORGING A NEW ARAB BLOC. A PEACE AGREEMENT WOULD ALSO PRESUMABLY ALLOW THE OPENING OF THE SUEZ CANAL WHICH WOULD GREATLY FACILITATE SOVIET FLEET MOVEMENT INTO THE INDIAN OCEAN AND THE PERSIAN GULF. CONSEQUENTLY, THE CHINESE THEMSELVES VERY LIKELY PREFER THOUGH NOT FULL SCALE WAR, AT LEAST PROTRACTED CONFRONTATION AND CONTENTION IN THE MID-EAST.

8. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE PRC HAS LITTLE INFLUENCE ON THE QUESTION OF WAR OR PEACE IN THE MID-EAST AND IT CANNOT AFFORD TO ANTAGONIZE THE MODERATE ARAB GOVERNMENTS OR TO APPEAR TO BE A PEACE SPOILER. THEREFORE, WE EXPECT THAT THE PRC WILL FOLLOW A FLEXIBLE LINE, EXPRESSING ITS UNDERSTANDING OF ANY ARAB MOVES TOWARD PEACE AND AVOIDING ANY DIRECT MOVES TO TRY TO BLOCK NEGOTIATIONS. CHINA MIGHT EVEN AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN A PEACE CONFERENCE, BUT IT WILL MOST LIKELY CRITICIZE AND DISASSOCIATE ITSELF FROM SOLUTIONS WHICH ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE TO THE ARAB MILITANTS, IN PARTICULAR THE PLO.
OSBORN

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